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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Bulgaria

SUBJECT Elementary School Education: Hiring of Teachers/
Curriculum/Working Conditions for Teachers/Teacher
in Chelopechene

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DATE DISTR. 25 Jan 54

NO. OF PAGES 6

NO. OF ENCLS.

SUPP. TO
REPORT NO.

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Hiring of Elementary School Teachers

"There is an acute shortage of elementary school teachers in Bulgaria due to a lack of candidates. For this reason many returned teachers are still teaching in the schools. It is also very easy to get a teaching job.

"Teachers are hired by District People's Soviets. Anybody who has completed a secondary school (Gymnasium) can get a job as a temporary teacher. The students in pedagogical gymnasiums are asked before their final examinations if they intend to become teachers. If they say yes, they are immediately assigned to a school as regular teachers.

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[redacted] At the beginning of the school year a curriculum is sent from the District People's Soviet in which the subjects to be taught during the year are enumerated. Otherwise no detailed plans or instructions are ever given. [redacted]

"The school had seven grades. There were about 220 pupils, boys and girls, and eight teachers. In addition there was a kindergarten with one teacher, who was subordinate to the director of the school. She received her salary from the school but was under the control of another school inspector.

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"The school served two villages. Some of the children lived two or three kilometers away. The lessons started at 9 am. Every teacher upon his arrival had to sign his name in an attendance book and then proceed to his class. Usually the teachers had four regular hours in their respective classes and one to two additional hours in other classes. The teaching period lasted 45 minutes after which there was a 10-minute break. In the afternoon every teacher was obliged to come to the school to prepare himself for the next day's lessons.

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[redacted] The children were in school usually from nine am. to noon or one pm. From early spring to late autumn they were also helping their parents in the fields and had little time left for homework. For that reason there was a tendency to teach children entirely at school, with no outside requirements.

"Every teacher is obliged to keep a special note book, in which he enters the plan, Plan Skitsa, for the month with an outline of the material he wants to teach, planning how much time he will give to lectures and how much to training his pupils. Then he enters in this note book a plan for each day and each hour. He also notes what kind of pedagogical methods he will use. From time to time the director of the school comes to the classes and checks if the 'Plan' is realized and in what way. Occasionally the inspector from the District Soviet arrives at the school for inspection. The inspector informs a teacher in advance when he will visit his class and then makes notes and listens to the lesson. At the end he may question the pupils. After the lesson the inspector checks the 'Plan' and makes comments. After his visit the inspector reports to the Department of Education in the District People's Soviet, noting his opinion of the teachers. If during such a visit a teacher gets a bad mark, he will be once again controlled by the inspector.

"Each district is divided into several teachers' regions (Rayon), usually four to five. Two or three times a month there are special conferences of teachers. At such conferences the teachers attend a lesson given by one of the teachers and then discuss it. Often, one of the teachers from the school where the conference takes place lectures on his special subject. A discussion then follows. At the end the place and time for the next conference is decided.

"Every school teacher, in preparing his lesson, must enter in the so-called Plan Skitsa, the purpose of the lesson. He must consider three factors: The educational and moral; the ideological and political; and the scientific. Thus the teacher must specify in advance what he intends to say from the educational, political and scientific points of view.

"The ideological and political factor must always be stressed no matter what the subject. Take a geographical lesson:

- a) The teacher always starts from the northern frontier of Bulgaria, the Danube. He shows the river and the whole frontier and explains that north of the Danube lies Rumania. At this point he deviates from the lesson of geography and starts the political indoctrination. He asks the children why Rumania is called a 'People's Republic'. The children have already been taught this and answer that it means that Rumania is not a kingdom or anything else but a 'republic of people', a 'People's Republic'. Then the teacher asks when Rumania became a 'People's Republic'. Here he must stress the help of the Soviet Army in establishing the Rumanian republic. Then the teacher returns

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to geography and shows the further flow of the Danube. Again he stresses which of the adjacent or nearby countries are also 'peoples' republics'.

-) Then the teacher may pass to a description of the Eastern frontier. He explains that on this side Bulgaria has frontiers with Rumania, the USSR^(sea) and Turkey. Here the teacher devotes much of the lesson to a description of the USSR. He must explain the origin of the name of the USSR and stress the role in the struggle for 'peace'.
-) Passing to Turkey the teacher must stress that it is not a peoples' republic but a 'bourgeois' republic. The children already know that in such a republic there are the rich who rule while the poor are suffering. The teacher must explain, for example, that the factories belong not to the people but to individual owners, which means that hundreds of people have to work hard while one rich individual exploits them. He also must say that peasants are tied to the land which belongs to rich landowners and that they are real slaves. He must say that the culture of the Turks is much neglected; children cannot attend schools but from an early age must work for the rich. In addition the teacher must say that Turkey belongs to the camp of imperialistic countries.
-) The teacher will say the same about Greece as about Turkey. In addition he must mention the Greek partisans and their fight for liberation. He must stress that the Greek people are in sympathy with the USSR but are now in US slavery.
-) After describing the Western frontiers of Bulgaria the teacher must say that Yugoslavia was liberated by the Soviet army along with Bulgaria and the other peoples' republics, that first she entered the road of democracy and progress, but later it appeared that Tito had been a US agent and the tool of Western imperialists. He throws innocent people into prison; he murders decent Communists; he sells out Yugoslavia to the US. The teacher must stress that the Yugoslav people are for the USSR but that Tito grasped the power by a coup and now leads Yugoslavia against democracy.
-) At the end the teacher must describe the conditions on Bulgarian frontiers. On the Rumanian frontier he must say there is peace and silence. On the other frontiers there are still shootings because the 'imperialists' try to send spies and saboteurs into Bulgaria. At this point the teacher must speak briskly about the service and fidelity of Bulgarian frontier guards. Geography is a subject taught in all grades of elementary school. Lessons about Bulgarian frontiers are always conducted in the manner prescribed above.

An arithmetic lesson in the second grade may proceed as follows:

-) The teacher writes, for example, an exercise on the board with figures taken from the achievements of a collective farm or state enterprise. He may write that a collective farm produced in a certain year 200 tons of grain, that it delivered 20 tons to the state for the price of 20,000 Leva per ton. How much money will the collective receive from the state and how many tons of grain will be left for its own use?
-) One of the pupils reads aloud the question. The teacher asks the children if there is anything in the exercise they don't understand. Here the teacher starts to explain that the name of 'cooperative collective farm' (in Bulgarian: Trudovo-Kooperativno Zemledelsko Stopanstvo) derives from its ownership by those who work on it ('Trudiashchi', hence the name 'Trudovo'). Then he asks when such collective farms came into being. Here he must explain that it happened after the Communist coup of 9 September 1944.
-) The pupil tries to solve the question. He is asked by the teacher if a privately-owned farm is able to produce as much as a collective farm. Here the pupil or the teacher himself must answer 'no' and explain why. The teacher explains that state deliveries are very small and that with this food the state must feed the army, the people's militia and all other citizens who are not farmers. Finally he explains what the collective farm does with grain left to its use. He says that it covers its own needs and pays those who are working on the farm.

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"Stories in children's textbooks are mainly about partisans, uprisings and about the life in capitalistic countries. The textbook for the second grade of elementary schools contains, for example, a letter from a certain Mrs. Giuseppe, a US negress, to her friend in Bulgaria. She writes that she has to live in a small room in the cellar of a large building, that she cannot go to the movies in New York, or to public parks and other places frequented by the whites. She describes her misery and enslavement. An illustration is added to this text-a shocking drawing showing an emaciated child in some rags standing in a dilapidated room. The rest of the story belongs to the teacher. He must explain that there are large buildings in America, but that the vast majority of people live in utter misery, in the cellars of these buildings, that Negroes are maltreated, etc. Then he must say how well the Negroes are living in the USSR and how well cared for are the children in the USSR.

"School textbooks are changed every two years and are adapted to the current needs and propaganda line of the Party. During the period 1948 to 1950 the main theme in the textbooks was the nationalization of industry. Then the general theme was switched to the problems of workers, state enterprises, work competition drives and collectivization of land.

"Among the changes in Bulgarian elementary schools in recent years is a new method of teaching children to read and write. Formerly they were taught to recognize single letters from which, first simple, and then gradually more complicated words were built. Now, the opposite method has been introduced: the children are acquainted first with words, and then, after splitting them, with single letters.

"Also new note books have been introduced. Instead of the old notebooks with horizontal lines the Soviet type notebooks are used. Apart from horizontal lines they also have 'squint lines' under 60 degrees. In the rhombs thus formed the children draw (not write) single letters.

"Another innovation is the ruling that the children in the first grade must use pens instead of pencils. This results in the children being often stained with ink.

"The syllabus is now wider than formerly. In the seventh grade, for example, the teaching of algebra and zoology has been introduced. These subjects were formerly taught only in secondary schools (gymnasiums). The Russian language has been introduced and is obligatory in the fifth, sixth and seventh grades. There were plans to start it from the third grade. It is a subject which is taken very seriously; for children it is, apart from mathematics, the most difficult subject.

"Membership of the Septemvri Iytche organization was formerly compulsory for all school children. In 1952 a new regulation eliminated the first and second grade children from this compulsion. This organization had no special activities in the Cholqashene schools. It was mainly engaged in accepting new members and expelling others.

"Membership in the Bulgarian-Soviet Friendship Society is compulsory for school children from the sixth and seventh grade on, all teachers, officials of the village 'people's' Soviet officials of the collective farm managements and post office officials. Apart from these groups few other citizens belong to the Society.

Working Conditions for Teachers

"The only pedagogic textbooks which teachers must follow are the Soviet textbooks by (fmu) Goncharov and (fmu) Kairov. In the 1951-52 school year the teachers in Bulgarian elementary schools were obliged to learn from the textbook by Kairov. The director of each school was personally responsible for this. [redacted] all teachers gathered every second day for two hours to study from that textbook. However, everybody realized that it would be impossible at that rate to finish the book within one year. Therefore they came to the school for the study daily for one and a half to two hours. At these meetings one of the teachers read the text, while the others listened. Then there was a discussion, or one of the teachers spoke first on a particular topic based on the text of the book.

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"Two special periodicals in Bulgarian are published for teachers" 'Uchitelsko Delo' and 'Uchitelska Praktika'.

"Apart from his work in the school the teacher in Bulgaria is obliged to participate in various other activites. In 1951-52 [redacted] had to participate in the following: committee for gathering donations for Korea, committee for establishing a library in the village, the Bulgarian-Soviet Friendship Society, etc. Teachers are also obliged to arrange various meetings and deliver speeches. They are greatly overworked." 25X1

"The wages are unsatisfactory. [redacted] only 10,000 old Leva per month as a permanent teacher and an additional 2,000 Leva per month for the five additional hours per week. The director earned 16,000 Leva per month, and two old teachers earned 14,000 Leva each. The smallest salary went to a woman teacher who earned only 8,000 Leva. The janitor earned 7,500 Leva. Another janitor who came to clean the school but was not on permanent duty got 6,000 Leva. One per cent of the salary was deducted for some fund. From teachers who were over 21, five per cent was deducted as a 'bachelor' tax. The material situation of teachers in Bulgaria is thus difficult. They can hardly make a living and only with the greatest difficulties can they buy clothing." 25X1

"In 1952 summer vacations for teachers were reduced to 10 days. During the remaining time they must work as state employees on collective farms or state delivery offices. Holidays were also cut to one week twice in a school year."

"Formerly the teacher in Bulgaria was much respected; now he can be pushed around by any Communist. The people also look at him with suspicion. They do not trust him or have friendship for him as before."

Teachers in the Chelopechene Elementary School

"In 1952 the director of the elementary school, called Progimnazya Vasil Levski, in the village of Chelopechene in the Sofia district was an old, experienced teacher named Nikola Stoyev. He [redacted] had held his post before the Communist coup of 9 September 1944. He enjoyed great respect and had considerable influence in the village and the area. He was a real democrat and had never belonged to any political party or organization. After the coup of 9 September 1944 the Communists considered firing him from this post. He was saved by the village and by one of his teachers (Stoyan Grozdanov), who previously had been arrested on charges of pro-Communist activities but released after Stoyev had made an official declaration guaranteeing Grozdanov's integrity. The Director would like to retain his post until he becomes entitled to the old age pension. However, there is little hope that he will, as the situation was becoming more and more tense. It is quite probable that he already has been dismissed. The young teachers, who realized that he was not in CP favor, ceased to respect and obey him. The Director, who formerly enjoyed great respect among the teachers and managed the school well, began to feel insecure. Sometimes he asked those young teachers how to deal with certain problems in accordance with the new methods." 25X1

"Another old teacher is Stoyan Grozdanov, [redacted] an old Communist but a good teacher and a decent man. He well realized how much wrong the CP had done since the 1944 coup and he often protested various actions. He openly contended that neither workers nor peasants had gained any benefits and opposed the forcible collectivization of land. Shortly after the 1944 coup he was respected by the Party, but later on the Party ceased to consider his opinions. The village liked him and supported him." 25X1

"The third old teacher was Angel Popov, [redacted] who was appointed only after 9 September 1944. Before that date he had been an organizer of the Brannik organization. After the coup he tried to join the CP but was refused admission, and so he joined the pro-regime faction of the Peasant Party. He took part in activities of the Fatherland Front and was a member of the control commission of the local collective farm. He tried to keep aloof from the two other organizations (Brannik and the CP). As a teacher he was quite good." 25X1

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"His wife, Mara Popova, was an old, well qualified teacher. She has not belonged to any pro-regime organizations except for the women's organization to which all women must belong.

"The most active young teacher was Margarita Stancheva, [redacted] daughter of the former owner of the flour mills at Bela Slatina which were nationalized. She was a member of the Dimitrov's Peasant Youth Union and took an active part in the activities of this organization. She had a bad reputation in the village because of her love affairs. She neglected her duties as a teacher, and the director often had to work for her.

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"The second young woman teacher was Parvioletka Spasova, [redacted] who came from the village. She completed secondary education (Gymnasium) and had finished a course at the Pedagogical Institute. She was a very good teacher and did not belong to any organization. She was married to a second lieutenant. She was critical of the regime."

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